

15th International Roundtable on Business Survey Frames
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<p style="text-align: right;">Session No 4 Paper No 4 Terry Evers, Statistics Canada</p>
Quality Measures Guidelines

This session took place on Tuesday afternoon, October 23, 2001 and was convened by Statistics Canada. Three papers were presented. As introduction, Statistics Canada provided a framework for the session. A definition of quality, in the context of Business Registers, was provided. Some of the factors affecting quality were then outlined along with factors that dictate quality requirements. The objectives of the session were then provided.

Statistics Finland

Statistics Finland presented the first paper. They described a new initiative to improve the quality of business location data on their business register. This initiative was made up of four parts. The first part was to add a qualifier to the database to inform users of the quality of local unit address data on the register by rating the address data from good to poor, missing or defective format. The second part was to conduct an annual survey of nearly all multi establishment businesses, single establishment businesses currently in an existing survey sample and all new businesses. This survey collected information on ownership changes, location addresses and type of activity. The third part of this initiative was to use data from Finland Post to establish location address data for small, single establishment legal units. The fourth part of the initiative was to geo-code all location addresses on the register. Details on the process used and current status were provided for each part of the initiative.

Statistics Netherlands

Statistics Netherlands presented the second paper. They described their new management approach after their re-organization in 2000. The approach is based on a life cycle that includes the following elements (strategy, objectives, performance indicators, process, results and evaluation of results). Each of these steps was described in some detail.

The section on performance indicators was especially relevant to the session. Statistics Netherlands uses different performance indicators for different processes. The performance indicators used for assessing quality of input data are an annual quality report from their main source (Chambers of Commerce) and a sample survey of small enterprises. The performance indicators used for the production process include MIS data on processing activities and an assessment of the end product (relevancy, timeliness, comparability, and user satisfaction). An essential element of their management approach includes the creation of work engagements with all staff whereby personnel objectives and performance indicators are set for each employee.

Statistics Canada

The third paper was presented by Statistics Canada. They described existing quality practices in use to ensure / measure quality of out-going data, quality of Business Register processes, and quality of data supplied to the Business Register.

Quality of out-going data is measured by a quality assurance survey to determine over coverage, erroneous industrial coding and to estimate the population of businesses.

The quality of Business Register processes is being ensured in a number of ways. An industrial coding review system is available to survey programs to identify systematic problems with manual and automatic coding of new businesses. A MIS system provides full details on all incoming Business Register updates. A 'report card' containing performance indicators is produced for the 600 extremely large and complex businesses in Canada. Finally, a joint review process exists whereby surveys have a chance to review all proposed updates for the large and complex businesses in Canada.

The quality of data being supplied to the Business Register is being ensured by an Interceptor System which allows surveys and Business Register staff to review / accept register updates being identified by data collection centers before they are processed on the database.

Conclusion

Discussion took place after each paper on the specifics of what was presented. Following the three papers the session conveyor summarized the ideas that emerged from the session. There was general agreement on the following:

- The quality requirement for a Business Register is based on its intended use.
- Not only do users need to be informed about the quality of register data; there needs to be a partnership whereby they share the responsibility for ensuring the quality of the register.
- Inadequate quality of register data can be real or it can be perceived. Therefore quality measures / indicators need to be used to address each of these issues.
- Nearly all Business Registers are moving towards the use of more administrative data. This will improve overall register quality as it provides more complete, consistent and timely source of input.
- Most statistical agencies make use of a quality assurance survey to measure register quality. Given the cost of this exercise and the additional response burden placed on businesses it is essential that statistical agencies pay careful attention to the amount / type of data being collected and the frequency / timing of a quality assurance survey.